Letter from Taizé

BIMONTHLY 3.50 FF August - September 1991 / 4

Taizé
EUROPEAN MEETING OF YOUNG ADULTS
Budapest
30 December 91 – 4 January 92

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AUG 22 1991

Budapest, at the end of the year, European meeting of young people

In the face of challenges, a common hope

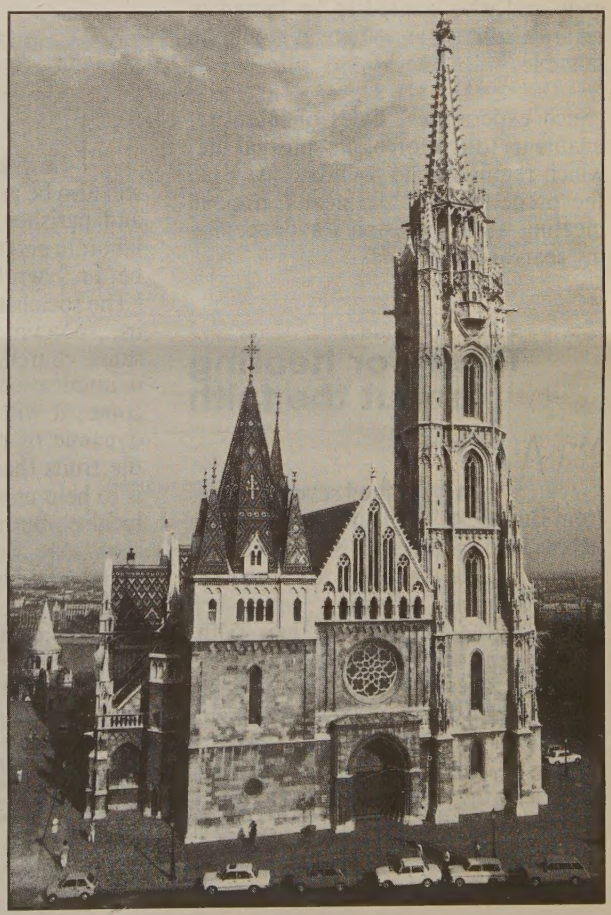
The city of Budapest has a significant geographical position for a European meeting: it is on the Danube that passes through eight countries, from the west of Germany to the Black Sea. The city is known for its large suspension bridges, an image of what the meeting will be, as it links the families and parishes of Budapest to the tens of thousands of young adults who will come from throughout Europe as pilgrims of trust.

For several years now, many young Hungarians have been able to take part in the European meetings. For even longer, they have been involved in "pilgrimages of trust" in their own country, for example this prayer in a parish of Budapest: "In the neighborhood church of Varosmajor, we began a common prayer fourteen years ago. Members of the parish, of all generations, participated with great faithfulness. For them, this very simple and partially silent prayer was important, because it was as a link with the universality of the Church. The link was made more concrete through visits, especially at the time of the European meetings: we held vigils at the end of the year, in communion with the young people meeting in a Western country which at the time was inaccessible for us. Each year, we received at the same time the Letter from Taizé made public during the meeting, and in that way we could feel connected to the searching of the young people of other countries. This was so important for us at a time when we felt isolated and locked in.

"The first time we were able to leave our country was for the meeting in Ljubljana, Slovenia. That first stage of a pilgrimage of an entire lifetime also led us, when we returned home, to make pilgrimages from time to time to another church in Budapest for prayer."

Like their neighbours in Eastern Europe, the Christians of Hungary want to share a faith that enabled them to stand firm during the period of totalitarianism. By their witness, they will transmit the enthusiasm of a faith that dares to take risks. Those who were committed knew that their lives were exposed. Now that there is freedom of expression, they are looking for ways of making their faith explicit for all those who have a great spiritual thirst. Before now there were no possibilities for religious education. Many people, especially the young, are undergoing a kind of crisis: the old socialist "values" no longer exist, and they have to find points of orientation in a society where anything imaginable can be proposed to give life meaning or happiness.

Continued on page 2



Saint Matthias Church on the hill of Buda

Continued from page 1

Risks and joy

"One of the signs of the vitality of the Church is the pilgrimage we took part in for three days," explained a girl. "For several years now, this pilgrimage has brought together young adults from the different parishes of Budapest.

"Each morning, after the prayer and an introduction to the theme of the day, we walked in silence or while praying. In the afternoon, while still walking, we shared deeply in small groups about what was most important in our lives. It was an intense sharing in which the need to live for Christ kept coming up, with all the risks which that entails, but also the joy of that communion.

"In the evening, we set up our tents for the night, and one day we celebrated the Eucharist in the middle of some Roman ruins. It was a reminder that our faith is based on that of the first Christians. The last day, we arrived at Esztergom for the celebration in honor of Cardinal Mindszenty who died in exile and who wanted to be buried in his own country as soon as it would be possible.

"Such experiences, times of intensity, enable us to reinforce our spiritual life, which requires solid foundations. I see the preparation of the next European meeting as an occasion for deepening my searching."

Thirst for hearing about the faith

"When we visited several groups from Budapest," explained some young people who came from Taizé for several weeks of visits, "we were astonished to see Christians reflecting with such depth on the meaning of their faith. What a surprise to hear some teenagers ask basic questions like «Do you believe that if we discover the meaning of our life in God, then we can reach a fullness?» Another cause for astonishment was the great number of young people being baptized.

"We attended the baptism of young people from non-Christian families who had begun to ask themselves questions about the meaning of their lives and had met young Christians. In the same spirit, how could we not be touched by the questions of a student who said she did not believe in God, but who wanted to hear us speak of the faith that inspired us after she heard us sing some of the songs of Taizé?"

To respond to this great expectation, in the parishes there are many groups of reflection and formation for young people, especially for young adults. These groups help people understand the Gospel better and are adapted to the needs of each person: those who are beginning to be interested in the faith, young couples already finished with their studies, students who want a more complete study of the Bible. Many meet to pray together or to undertake concrete projects. This great variety of groups in the same parish will make the European meeting a time of sharing and mutual enrichment.

A new page for their life

"The preparation for the meeting will also be an occasion for many groups and parishes in the same area to collaborate and to get to know one another better," wrote a boy from Budapest. "The socialist regime had tried to divide us, sometimes even members of the same church. Since parishes of every denomination will welcome those who come, it will be easier to enter into a dynamic of reconciliation. Another of the fruits that the meeting can provide is to help us to question ourselves, with lucidity, but without an excess of criticism. Are we able, after a time when there may have been compromises, to offer each person the possibility of beginning anew, writing a kind of new page for their life? Are we able to look ahead to build together? The Marxist regime taught us to oppose one another, to try to do away with those who were different: how can we witness to a generous love, with no hatred for anybody?

In the face of challenges

"It is important that, after having learned to protect ourselves, we dare to expose ourselves, learning to take on responsibilities in our parishes and communities. How can we learn to be attentive to the poor who are now so numerous; how can we take the risk, alone or together, of finding a commitment on behalf of others?"

A parish in Buda, the Western part of the city, is one of the places where many mutual-help projects have taken shape. Two years ago, that parish welcomed East Germans who were waiting for permission to emigrate from Hungary. Now Romanians are taking refuge there, either from Transylvania, where bonds of language and history with Hungary are so strong, or from other parts of Romania. People are helping them find work and a place to stay. In the same parish, a house was set up to welcome young people in difficulty, especially with drugs. Groups of young people are devoting themselves more particularly to contacts with the handicapped or the elderly. In many parishes, an active solidarity is being lived out both locally and with Romania, where projects are multiplying, especially for children.

The Hungarians have already shown that they know how to show a warm hospitality. In May 1989, 15,000 young people from East and West came together in the south of the country, in the city of Pécs, just a few months before the autumn that saw so many upheavals in Europe. At that time, sometimes even in small villages, many families had opened their doors! And it was marvellous to discover such a beautiful communion, there where beforehand fear and isolation had reigned. Even language was no longer an obstacle!

The borders have opened and the governments have changed in most of the countries of Eastern Europe, but they all have to deal with greater difficulties than expected. In this time of reconstruction, how can we express an active interest in one another; how can we confront together the challenge of creating a Europe that is "peaceful, free and reconciled?" This question, among many others, will be discussed during the meeting in Budapest. By sharing concrete examples, a common hope will be strengthened, rooted in prayer. □

Taizé

EUROPEAN MEETING OF YOUNG ADULTS

Budapest

30 December 91 – 4 January 92

Dates: Arrive Monday morning, 30 December 1991 between 7am and 12 noon. Depart early-afternoon, Saturday 4 January 1992.

Accommodation: with families, in parishes and schools. Simple conditions. Bring sleeping-bag and lightweight mattress. Groups should not arrange their own accommodation in advance as this detracts from the element of sharing.

General Programme: We will be welcomed by families and local church communities throughout the city. In each neighbourhood there will be a morning prayer, then meetings in small groups and visits to people with an involvement in the local area. Each day there will be two common prayers for everyone in the city-centre; in the afternoon, workshops on different themes.

17 to 29 year olds: three different ways of taking part:
— the main group: participation in the life of the parishes of the city.
— the silence group (has its own separate accommodation).
— while still participating in the life of the parishes, helping with practical work for the meeting, or "animation", or music for the common prayers. To do this, arrive, if possible, on December 28 between 8am and 3pm. It is not possible to arrive on Dec. 29.

15 & 16 year olds can only take part if accompanied by a group leader over 20 who stays with them, and all participate in the main group (see above) from 30 December on (do not arrive before).

Adults over 30 all participate in the main group (see above) from 30 December on (do not arrive before). Those who cannot stay in the same simple conditions as the young people and need a "real bed" indicate this on their registration form. Those who are accompanying a group of young people are welcome to stay with them if they will accept the same simple accommodation.

Families with children, and people with a disability who need special accommodation should register directly to Taizé — best by telephone in October or November — to arrange suitable accommodation.

Your contribution to cost (about £35) covers all meals during the meeting and a public transport pass. A more exact estimate of the contribution expected from each participant will be given in a later edition of the Letter from Taizé.

Travel
— from Britain:
1. Coach. Departure from London, very early 29th December. Return to London, late evening 5th January. (Price about £150: Nuneaton Coaches, Whitacre Road, NUNEATON, CV11 6BN. Tel: (0203) 325682 / 328410 Fax: (0203) 375875.)
2. To arrive on December 28th to help: either go with a coach leaving from Taizé just after Christmas (contact Taizé for exact time and price in autumn), or coach from London by Nuneaton Coaches.

— from other countries: write to Taizé for information.

Send in your registration form by 1 December at the latest. Fuller information will be sent in November to those who have already registered.
— Those who live in Britain send their forms to a contact person (list on a separate paper and in autumn edition of the *Letter from Taizé*). — Only the following should register direct to Taizé: families with children; those with special accommodation needs; anyone living outside Britain. Address: "European Meeting", 71250 Taizé-Community, France.Tel: 85.50.30.02 – Fax: 85.50.30.16.

Preparations :

Setting out on pilgrimage implies a preparation. Practically speaking, in each region the participants will organize themselves to make the journey, but in a certain sense, the pilgrimage is already beginning now.

...in the summer and the autumn at Taizé

For all who are able, a stay in Taizé during this time of year is a way of beginning an inner journey. The presence of a great many young adults from different countries offers a preview of the rich experience of dialogue and common prayer during a European meeting.

During the week in Taizé:

- young Hungarians will explain their situation and the meaning of the meeting for them.

- in the sharing groups, it will be possible to begin the reflection that will continue in Budapest on the essential questions to be asked in order to be creators of trust and peace.

- in the silence that can be easily found in some places in Taizé, each person can discover what is most important in their own personal pilgrimage with Christ.

- sharing with other young people from the same region is an occasion to see how to prepare at home and what suggestions the others have.

...in the autumn and winter at home

Meetings can be organized to pray and share, together with those who will not be going to Budapest for the meeting.

It would be good to organize gatherings around the following elements, for example once a month:

- a prayer and, if it is Friday evening, the prayer around the cross.

- a time for a "Johannine hour" (see page 4 of this letter).

- a sharing in small groups on a part of the Letter from Prague.

- a sharing in small groups on the question: How can we root our pilgrimage to Budapest in the life of our Christian communities and be, upon our return, bearers of dynamism and inspiration in our local reality (also think about suggesting a prayer for the departure and one for the return)?

- a time to reflect on visits to be made to others nearby, and to think about the signs of hope that can be found locally, in one's own situation.

European Meeting Registration Form. Send in by December 1st either to a contact person (Britain) or (if you live outside Britain) to Taizé.

FIRST NAME :

FAMILY NAME :

ADDRESS :

(with post code and country)

Tel.: ...../..... Occupation : ..... Age : .....

Circle "Yes" or "No" *or complete where necessary :*

- I am coming with a group from the town of .....
  led by .....
- For adults (over 30 years) and those who cannot sleep on the floor:
  I need a bed : yes / no : *If "yes", say whether you are (please circle):*
  woman man couple family with ... children disabled person with helper
- I will arrive on 30th December : yes / no (arrival between 7am and 12pm)
- I will arrive on 28th December (17-30 year olds only) : yes / no
  to help with **(please circle) :** animation / work / music team.
- N.B. If, for any reason, you are arranging your own accommodation please send us the address where you will be staying.
- I would like ... more registration forms (photocopy your own if possible)

Recognizing the voice of the one we love

For several years now, the Letter from Taizé has been publishing "Johannine hours" for each month. Here are some reflections on this way of reading the Bible.

Why "Johannine hours"? To try and listen, in the steps of the apostle John, to the voice of Christ. For John, perhaps more than for the other Biblical authors, being with Christ does not mean first of all acquiring knowledge, but recognizing the voice of the one our hearts love (see John 10,3-5).

But how can we read the Bible so as to hear the sound of Christ's voice? We need silence for this, because amidst the flood of words and noise that forces itself on us, the voice of Christ is quite soft. We also need to share, to communicate what we have heard and to listen to what others have understood. Nobody can, by themselves alone, grasp all the fullness of Christ.

The idea of "Johannine hours" was born in Taizé as a simple response to the longing of all those who, both in Taizé and in other places, were trying to assimilate the Bible's message in the midst of their daily life. Because of work or studies, it is often impossible to spend long hours in silence, but everyone can take an hour from time to time to enter a church, sit before an icon at home or go out into the solitude of nature. There, in silence, we can meditate on a passage of Scripture to listen to the voice of Christ.

Another reason for the "Johannine hours" is to foster a sharing. Concretely, this can happen in several ways. Some friends from the same parish or city can meet at the end of an afternoon to read aloud the Bible passage together, then they can spend an hour or two in silence and conclude with a brief sharing and a prayer.

If everyone does not have the same two or three hours free, a day can be set aside when each person, at whatever hour they choose, can read the text and meditate on it in silence. In the evening, everyone can gather at the home of one of the participants or at the parish for a discussion and possibly a time of prayer.

Others choose to read and reflect on the same Bible passage for an entire month, and then, when they have become very familiar with it, they meet for a time of sharing. Whatever form it takes, the important thing about the "Johannine hours" is the complementarity between two elements—silence and sharing. The Word of God both touches the depth of the heart and gathers together in a fellowship.

During the time of silence, and even more during the group sharing, it is important to concentrate on what we understand and not waste time worrying if, in some Biblical expressions, we find it difficult to hear the voice of Christ. Saint John wrote, "What we have seen and heard, we proclaim to you...so that your joy may be complete" (1 John 1,3-4).

Each person should say to themselves concerning the sharing that concludes the "Johannine hours," "What I have understood and heard of Christ, that is what I want to communicate to others. I don't want to burden them with my own hesitations but rather tell them what has brought me joy, what has led me to run the risk of trusting more deeply."

The Word of God has sometimes become an object of disputes. When that happens, the voice of Christ can no longer be heard; his word becomes inaccessible. Reading the Bible, instead of offering nourishment and vitality, instead of being a way of inner liberation, becomes a heavy burden to bear.

Through the "Johannine hours," we can discover the basic intuition of Saint John who writes that, from the beginning, the Word of God is Christ, and Christ alone (John 1,1.9). Christ contains, interprets and enlightens the multiplicity of Bible texts.

A century after the time of the apostles, arguments and different opinions concerning Bible texts threatened to disconcert people's humble trust in God. Then Irenaeus of Lyons who, in Asia Minor, had personally known a witness of the faith taught by John himself, wrote: "Through the polyphony of texts, a single harmonious melody rings out, singing of the God who made all things."

May the "Johannine hours" allow us to hear that harmonious melody, which is none other than the voice of Christ who loves us. If we listen in our heart to the Word of God, and assimilate it in our life so as to put it into practice, then we will truly be blessed.

September

Meditating on the word

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

SUN Dt 4.1-8 • ***Lk 14.1-14***
Jesus said: When you have a inner, invite the poor, the crip-led, the lame and the blind, and ou will be blessed, for they have o means to repay you.

Mon Pr 3.3-7 • ***Lk 4.14-22***
The Lord has sent me to bring ood news to the poor and to roclaim freedom to those in aptivity.

Tue **Lk 4.22-30** • *Pr 3.26-31*
God will be your confidence, nd will keep your feet from eing snared.

Wed Lk 4.38-41 • ***Pr 4.18-27***
Above all else, watch over our heart, for it is the wellspring f life.

Thu **Lk 4.42-44** • *Pr 16.9/19-20*
Happy the one who is atten-ve to the Word and who trusts the Lord.

Fri Pr 23.17-18 • ***Lk 5.1-11***
Jesus said to Simon Peter, Put out into deep water and let own your nets for a catch." Master," Simon replied, "we ave worked hard all night long ithout catching anything, but ecause you say so I will let own the nets."

Sat Lk 5.12-16 • ***Na 1.7-8***
The Lord is better than a for-ess in time of trouble. He recog-izes those who trust in him, ven when the flood rushes on.

SUN Is 35.4-7 • ***Mk 7.31-37***
Jesus took the man who was eaf and could hardly speak side, away from the crowd. With deep sigh, Jesus said Ephphatha!", that is, "Be pened!". At this, the man's ears ere opened, his tongue was osened and he spoke clearly.

Mon Lk 5.17-26 • ***Ph 1.3-6***
I am confident that the One ho began a good work in you ill go on completing it until the ay of Christ Jesus comes.

10 Tue Lk 5.33-39 • ***Ph 1.7-11***
Paul writes: I pray that your ve may abound more and more knowledge and depth of in-ght, so that you may be able to iscern what is best.

11 Wed Lk 6.6-11 • ***Ph 1.20-26***
Paul writes: For me, to live is Christ.

12 Thu Ph 1.27-30 • ***Lk 6.12-19***
At that time, Jesus went up into the hills to pray and he spent the whole night praying to God.

13 Fri Ph 2.1-4 • ***Lk 6.20-23***
Looking at his disciples, Jesus said: Happy are you who are poor, the kingdom of God is yours.

14 Sat **Jn 3.13-21** • *Ph 2.6-11*
Being in every way like a human being, Christ Jesus was humbler yet, and became obedient to death, death on a cross. Therefore God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names.

15 SUN Is 50.5-9 • ***Mk 8.27-35***
Jesus said: If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let them renounce themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

16 Mon Ph 2.12-18 • ***Lk 6.27-35***
Jesus said: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

17 Tue Ph 3.8-11 • ***Lk 6.36-38***
Jesus said: Give, and it will be given to you. A full measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For the measure you use will be the measure used for you.

18 Wed Lk 6.46-49 • ***Ph 3.12-16***
Paul writes: I do not consider that I have already made it, but forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal.

19 Thu Lk 7.1-10 • ***Ph 3.17-4.1***
Paul writes: Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transfigure our lowly bodies into the likeness of his glorious body.

20 Fri **Lk 7.11-17** • *Ph 4.4-7*
Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice!

21 Sat Ep 4.1-6 • ***Mt 9.9-13***
St MATTHEW As he walked, Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me". And he got up and followed him.

22 SUN Ws 2.12-20 • ***Mk 9.30-37***
Jesus said to his disciples: If anyone wants to be first, they must make themselves last of all and servant of all.

23 Mon Lk 7.24-28 • ***Ws 1.1-3***
Seek God in simplicity of heart; for he reveals himself to those who do not mistrust him.

24 Tue Ws 1.7/12-15 • ***Lk 7.36-50***
Jesus said to a woman, "Your sins are forgiven." Those who were present began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" But Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

25 Wed Lk 8.4-8 • ***Ws 6.12-15***
The wisdom of God is readily seen by those who love her. Those who seek her will find.

26 Thu Ws 7.7-10 • ***Lk 8.11-15***
Jesus said: The seed is the word of God. The seed that falls on good soil, this is people who live according to the word and yield a rich harvest because they persevere.

27 Fri Lk 8.22-25 • ***Ws 7.21-26***
God's wisdom is a reflection of the eternal light, an untarnished mirror of his active power and image of his goodness.

28 Sat Ws 11.22-12.2 • ***Lk 8.43-48***
Lord, for you all is possible. You overlook people's sins, so that they can repent. Yes, you love everything that exists.

29 SUN Nb 11.25-29 • ***Mk 9.38-48***
Jesus said: If anyone gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, then in truth I tell you, they will certainly not lose their reward.

30 Mon **Lk 8.49-56** • *Rm 1.11-17*
Paul writes: The Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who has faith.

Johannine Hours

Isaiah 58,6-12

Johannine hours are suggested as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer, in the midst of our life at home. During the course of the day take a couple of hours to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, the group (3 to 10 people) meet together to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

This passage, one of the most beautiful Bible texts concerning social justice, dates from a time when the inhabitants of Jerusalem were deeply discouraged. Their city could not recover its past splendour. Deep wounds left by war and exile seemed to resist healing. The people called out to God, but weakly and passively (see v. 3-5). They were hoping that God would answer, but at the same time they kept their eyes shut to all that could be done for the most unfortunate, already at the present time.

So the prophet reminds the people to what extent God desires their collaboration in the work of rebuilding their shaken and wounded societies. They are the ones, each according to his or her possibilities, who have to "loosen the chains of injustice," "share their bread with the hungry" and "shelter the homeless" (v. 5-6). When they do that, they will be surprised to find what they were looking for in vain when they were downcast and passive: a response from God, and even an intimate relationship, since God will come to them constantly with the words, "Here I am!" (v. 9).

The passage helps us see that responsabilities for society are not merely an outward adjunct to the inner life of faith. They must be undertaken in such a way that they allow God to enter more deeply into our lives and "make our light shine out like the dawn" (v. 8). Does not Christ himself tell us that he comes to meet us in the least of our brothers and sisters (Matt 25,40)?

- What are the responsibilities that God is asking me not to run away from?How can we discern in our commitments and responsibilities not a heavy burden, but a way of healing and light?

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

October

Meditating on the word

1 Tue Lk 9.1-6 • ***Rm 5.1-5***
We are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is through him, by faith, that we now stand in God's grace.

2 Wed Lk 9.18-22 • ***Rm 5.6-11***
The proof that God loves us is this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been reconciled to God by Christ's death, how much more shall we be saved by his life!

3 Thu **Lk 9.23-24** • *Rm 6.4-6*
Paul wrote: If we have been united with Christ in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

4 Fri Ga 6.14-18 • ***Mt 11.25-30***
Jesus said: I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for having revealed to little children what you have hidden from the learned and clever.

5 Sat Lk 9.28-36 • ***Rm 6.8-11***
Paul writes: We believe that if we died with Christ then we shall live with him too.

6 SUN Heb 2.9-11 • ***Mk 10.2-16***
Jesus said: Let the little children come to me; do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.

7 Mon Lk 9.46-50 • ***Rm 7.4-6***
Paul writes: Now we are released from the Law, having died to what was binding us, and so we are in a new service, that of the Spirit, and not in the old service of a written code.

8 Tue Rm 8.1-4 • ***Lk 9.57-62***
Someone said to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus answered, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

9 Wed Lk 10.17-22 • ***Rm 8.5-11***
The One who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.

10 Thu Lk 10.23-24 • ***Rm 8.14-17***
Paul writes: You did not receive a spirit which makes you a slave to fear again; you received the spirit of sonship by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

11 Fri **Lk 10.25-28** • *Rm 8.18-25*
Paul writes: We look towards our salvation in hope. Now, to hope for what we see is not hope at all. To hope for what we do not see means to await it with constancy.

12 Sat Rm 8.26-27 • ***Lk 10.29-37***
Having told the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus asked the teacher of the law, "Who showed themselves to be a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" He replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

13 SUN Ws 7.7-11 • ***Mk 10.17-30***
Jesus said: No one who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age, together with persecutions, and, in the age to come, eternal life.

14 Mon Rm 8.31-39 • ***Lk 10.38-42***
Jesus said to Martha: You are worried and upset about many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one.

15 Tue Lk 11.1-4 • ***Rm 10.8-13***
Paul writes: There is no difference between persons: all have the same Lord, who generously blesses all who call on him.

16 Wed Rm 11.29/33-36 • ***Lk 11.9-13***
Jesus said: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.

17 Thu Lk 11.14-20 • ***Rm 12.1-2***
Do not model yourselves on the pattern of this world, but let yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may discern the will of God.

18 Fri 2 Tm 4.9-17 • ***Lk 10.1-9***
St LUKE Jesus said: The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. So pray that the Lord of the harvest may send out workers into his harvest.

19 Sat Lk 12.6-12 • ***Rm 12.9-12***
Paul writes: May your love be sincere, cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

20 SUN Is 53.10-11 • ***Mk 10.35-45***
Jesus said: The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life to save many.

21 Mon Lk 12.13-21 • ***Si 14.1-16***
Happy are they who are not in anguish over their failings and who do not founder in despair. For if they are hard upon themselves, to whom will they be kind?

22 Tue Si 17.1-12 • ***Lk 12.22-31***
Jesus said: Do not be anxious about your life. Can any of you, by worrying about it, add a single moment to the length of your life? If such a small thing is beyond your power, why worry about the rest?

23 Wed Si 28.2-7 • ***Lk 12.32-34***
Jesus said to his disciples: Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the Kingdom.

24 Thu Lk 12.35-40 • ***Si 30.21-23***
Trick the cares that weigh upon you, console your heart, chase sorrow far away, for sorrow is no use to anybody.

25 Fri Si 34.15-17 • ***Lk 12.43-50***
Jesus said: I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already burning!

26 Sat Lk 13.6-9 • ***Si 35.17-24***
The Lord will not be slow in the service of justice for his people. He will make them rejoice in his mercy.

27 SUN Jr 31.7-9 • ***Mk 10.46-52***
"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked a blind man. "Rabbi, I want to see", he replied. And Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has saved you."

28 Mon Lk 6.12-19 • ***Ep 2.19-22***
In Christ, you are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by the Spirit.

29 Tue Lk 13.10-17 • ***Zc 2.14-17***
Sing and rejoice, my people, for I am coming to live among you, says the Lord.

30 Wed Zc 8.4-8 • ***Lk 13.18-21***
Jesus said: The kingdom of God is like leaven that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it all rose.

31 Thu **Lk 14.12-14** • *Zc 8.13-17*
The Lord says: I shall save you and you will be a blessing. Do not be afraid!

Johannine Hours

Luke 1,26-38

Johannine hours are suggested as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer, in the midst of our life at home. During the course of the day take a couple of hours to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, the group (3 to 10 people) meet together to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" people said (John 1,46). And yet, in that lost corner of the world, God was preparing the way to renew all humanity. To do this, he asked from the start for the help of simple people. Mary, an unknown girl, to be followed later by shepherds, fishermen...

Luke does not conceal Mary's difficulty in believing in God's unheard of promise. But from the beginning of God's covenant with his people, he had begun to prepare this "yes" in the midst of humanity. He prepared Mary who is not disbelieving like Sarah was (Gen 18,14), who does not ask for proof like Zechariah (Luke 1,18); she surrenders herself in a transparent "yes." She calls herself "the Lord's servant": her life will no longer be simply a matter of following her own plans with greater or lesser success. Through it a great mystery will come about: God's visit to human beings.

Her only support for this are these words: "Rejoice, beloved of God; the Lord is with you. The child will be called God's Son." Her trust, even though it will be shared by others (Elizabeth Luke 1,42; 2,17), will be put to the test by the disconcerting path that Jesus takes. Her struggle will not become any easier as time goes by; it will continue until the cross (John 19,25). After the resurrection, we see Mary praying with the apostles (Acts 1,14). From now on, God will continue to visit human beings through the Church, through each and every believer.

● What enables us to keep saying a "yes" to God, to take the risk of believing that Christ comes to others through our own life? How do I express this "yes" in my daily life?

Yugoslavia

Coming together

For the First-of-May holidays, some of us decided to make a little "pilgrimage of trust" and meet in Belgrade. We came from Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia. On arriving in Belgrade, we met at the fraternity of the Little Sisters of Jesus. We found there an Albanian from Kosovo, two girls from Montenegro and several young Serbs. Almost all the parts of Yugoslavia were thus represented.

For several years ow, but especially for the last months, ugoslavia has been going through eat changes and difficulties which that volves. Due to the immense political, onomic, social and cultural diversity, seems at times almost impossible for e republics ever to be able to find a ew way of living under the same roof gain, a way acceptable for all.

omplete uncertainty as to the future, ten dramatic, rather irrational events king place overnight with at the same me no constructive solution in view, gether with the worsening economic tuation, often give people the feeling living in the midst of chaos. Since olence and armed conflict have be- me a reality, fear often prevails over pathy.

Great discretion

We were astonished at it was possible to come together. eing gathered that night in a very sim- le prayer seemed to be a good reason nough to have come. There was a lot silence in our prayer. While talking each other, many things remained nsaid. Our understanding of all that is oing on differs in many ways and that rtainly brings pain.

y accepting this pain, without trying to nd a superficial "reconciliation," and the same time by persevering in see- g each other as brothers and sisters in hrist, we understand a little bit more the miracle and the beauty of being embers of his mysterious body, the hurch. And from that point alone erhaps new ways can start opening.

Those we went to visit the next few days were equally astonished. The Catholic archbishop thought we were all Slovenians, while a mother superior of an Orthodox monastery thought we were all Serbs. Realizing we came from all over the country, they both exclaimed in almost the same words, revealing a joyful astonishment: but what has brought you together?

We prayed especially for the meeting between the archbishop of the Croatian Catholic Church and the patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church. At the time it seemed difficult to find a place with mixed Serbian and Croatian populations where they could meet, the army having marched into one place they had chosen after another. The meeting took place three days later at Sremski Karlovci, a region of mixed population.

After a long conversation, the two men made this declaration: "At this dramatic hour, and in a situation which is, humanly speaking, inextricable, we keep our eyes fixed on God who alone can save us and we beg Christians, other believers and all people of good will to rediscover brotherly relations. We call upon all political leaders and representatives to seek with all their strength solutions to the conflicts on the basis of justice, of the service of freedom, for the peace and security of all.

"Only in this way can destructive violence of property and persons created in the image of God be avoided." Perhaps this meeting, without having had any notable political repercussions, remains an important sign for many.

Our "pilgrimage of trust" was an occasion for confirming the fact that simple steps, visits and common prayers, can be a way of creating a climate of trust. In the present situation, which so often seems like an exhausting nightmare, this enabled us to catch our breath.

The problems that occupy the attention of the media are in some sense "extraordinary" problems. Having been able to leap over walls that seemed insurmountable, for a few days and with a few people, we are more than ever aware that each individual bears a part of the responsibility for creating trust on earth, as well as here and now with respect to a great many more "ordinary" problems, such as loneliness in our cities, alcoholism, the drug problem among our youth...

Building trust

This visit helped us see, too, the importance of day-by-day faithfulness and local initiatives supported by many Christians, and what it at stake in them.

There are people who give all their energy to individual relationships, to traditional forms of hospitality.

There are also people who find new energy each day through prayer and the liturgy. For years now, still others have been discovering new ways to be close to those who are isolated and excluded.

All these experiences are not spectacular, and do not attract attention. But they show that many, even in this period of exceptional tensions, give their time and their life to build trust. ■

Listening to the CONTINENTS

Burkina-Faso

"Word and Bread for all and by all"

At first we spent several weeks in the south of the country. That is a privileged region with respect to the rest of the country, because there is a bit more rain. Now, people from the north have begun to settle there. Several cultures exist side by side, but there are tensions. There are not many development projects because the Sahel region, in the north, requires much more aid. The diocese of Diebougou, where we were, plays an important role in social promotion and development. Pastoral activity is centred on a programme called "Word and Bread for all and by all." Evangelization goes hand in hand with the development of social and economic life. Lay people are taking on many responsibilities in the parishes; sometimes, parishioners even put together their money so that one of them can study to become an animator or a catechist.

Despite all the problems, the spirit of festival remains. There is a tradition that each village celebrates for several days each year all the villagers who have died during the past year. There are dances with masks, which symbolize the departed. When we were there, each village in turn had its time of celebration, then there was the great festival of Easter and the end of Ramadan. On the eve of Easter, each church of the city had to welcome more than a hundred newly baptized adults, and in the morning, the same number of children were baptized.

In the north, we were in Ouahigouya, on the edge of the desert. There is famine everywhere, except in the city where there is a dam. Since there was no rainy season, there was no millet harvest. People in the villages manage to survive as a result of international aid, and a long process of teaching agricultural techniques has begun to allow the little water there is to be used better.

In the city, the people support one another and welcome those who have to leave their villages. Most of the people are Muslims, but the Christians are well integrated. Community life is intense, with prayers, times of reflection, and organized youth groups. We learned a lot by sharing with the people day by day; we saw how some, in their indigence, are able to give even what they need to live.

When we returned to France, we were able to share our discoveries, and from now on the relations between our town and those dioceses will take on new meaning. We now know better all that we have to receive and, thanks to this visit, the material aid we send will continue with a new hope.

Bangladesh

The Resurrection, today...

At a time when Bangladesh was undergoing one of its worst natural catastrophes in many years, we received news of a meeting of young people held in Rajshahi, just before the cyclone that devastated Chittagong.

"The day after Easter, we had a meeting with the youth of the Western region of Bangladesh. In that region, in the midst of a Muslim population, live several minorities of tribals who feel very separated from other Christians. Some 400 young people came from different parts of the country, with their different cultures, languages and denominations.

"The first common prayer was a new experience for most, with readings in different languages and a time of silence. For four days, we meditated on different aspects of the general theme «What is the meaning of the Resurrection, particularly in Bangladesh today?» For the Bible sharing, all met together after the introduction in small groups in the garden of mango trees surrounding the church. In the evening, when the heat abated a little, we met in the church for another common prayer. The church was decorated very simply with branches and flowers, illuminated by candles in front of icons.

"One afternoon, small groups set out to visit the villages where the tribals live. These villages are very poor, but the people have a strong awareness of their culture. They welcomed the young people with their traditional songs and dances, and for once this was not in order to frighten outsiders, but to share the best of what they had with them.

"Bangladesh, one of the poorest nations on earth, is going through a very difficult period. Political instability and the impossibility for students to continue their studies in a regular fashion are creating much uncertainty in the life of the young. No one knows what the future will bring. Therefore many see no meaning in their life; it is as if they were walking in darkness. The meeting gave us the possibility of reflecting on the meaning of our life, and for some it was a brand-new stage."

Malaysia

Under the same roof

Before and after the meeting in Manila many visits were made in most countries of Asia. A brother tells of his sojourn in one part of Malaysia:

"Eighteen young Malaysians came to the meeting in Manila. Before they left, we decided to visit them and this time to go directly to East Malaysia, to Sarawak. A young man from Singapore arrived directly in Kuching, on the eve of the ordination to the priesthood of a young man belonging to the Bidayu tribe, and everybody was preparing for the celebration. The youth of the village where Jerome, the new priest, was born, entered the cathedral in procession to the rhythm of traditional dance and songs; he followed with his aged mother. We were then invited to his village for his first Mass. It was a long journey, in part by boat. Each village has a large community hall, and it was there that all the inhabitants gathered after the Mass, from little children to elderly people, to take part in the speeches and dances expressing their joy for the new priest. Then they brought us to visit families in the «long houses,» buildings characteristic of this region, where up to ninety families live under the same roof. How surprising was for us to hear them sing «Ubi caritas»!

"Then we visited other cities and each evening we met for a time of sharing and prayer with young people and adults of different churches and races looking for ways of making reconciliation a concrete reality in their lives. At Sibu, Miri, everywhere the welcome was warm and the discussions about how to transmit the Gospel went far. Some young lay persons have given their time to be at the service of the local Church."

Letter from Taizé

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